Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 15851 041947Z

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 15851

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, JM, UK
SUBJECT: BRITISH ATTITUDES TOWARDS JAMAICA

REFERENCE: STATE 243146

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH EVENTS IN JAMAICA REQUIRE CAREFUL WATCHING. THE FOREIGN OFFICE DOES NOT FORESEE A RADICAL SHIFT IN JAMAICAN POLITICS NOR A CONCOMITANT THREAT TO BRITISH INTERESTS. END SUMMARY

1. AS REQUESTED IN REFTEL. EMBASSY OFFICER CALLED ON MILES PRESTON, HEAD OF FCO CARIBBEAN DEPARTMENT, AND PETER LONGWORTH, THE DEPARTMENT'S POLITICAL DIRECTOR, TO DISCUSS JAMAICA. NEITHER EXPRESSED ANY SPECIAL CONCERN ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ISLAND AND CERTAINLY NO ALARM. MANLEY'S NEW CONNECTIONS WITH CUBA, THEY BELIEVE, SHOULD BE WATCHED CAREFULLY BUT SO FAR DO NOT APPEAR THREATENING. CUBAN INFLUENCE WITH THE JAMAICAN POLICE IS COUNTERED BY THE PROFESSIONAL AND APOLITICAL JAMAICAN DEFENSE FORCE WHICH MAINTAINS GOOD LINKS WITH THE UK.

2. THE BRITISH SEE MANLEY AS A NAIVE OFTEN FOOLISH LEADER BUT NEITHER A MARXIST NOR A REVOLUTIONARY. LONGWORTH CHARACTERIZED HIM AS CONSCIOUS OF THE LEFT WING OF HIS PARTY AND, THEREFORE, IMPELLED ON OCCASION TO MAKE STATEMENTS OR COMMITMENTS IN AN UNGUARDED MANNER.
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PAGE 02 LONDON 15851 041947Z

WHILE MANLEY IS PROBABLY INCAPABLE OF CONTROLLING THE

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

FORCES IN JAMAICAN POLITICS. THE MAINSTREAMS OF BOTH PARTIES ARE DECIDEDLY DEMOCRATIC AND THE PUBLIC AS A WHOLE IS LEERY OF TOO CLOSE AN ASSOCIATION WITH CUBA. MANLEY IS ERRATIC, BUT JAMAICAN INSTITUTIONS ACT AS A RELIABLE BRAKE.

3. THE FCO EXPECTS MANLEY TO STICK WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE JAMAICAN CONSTITUTION AND CALL ELECTIONS BEFORE MAY 1977. WITH THE CREATION OF SEVEN NEW CONSTITUENCIES AND WITH THE CONTINUED STATE OF EMERGENCY. THE JLP WILL DOUBTLESS BE THE DISADVANTAGED COMPETITOR. ALL THINGS REMAINING EQUAL, MANLEY WILL LIKELY WIN BUT WITH A REDUCED MAJORITY.

4. PRESTON SAID HE UNDERSTOOD AMERICAN CONCERN FOR THE COURSE OF EVENTS IN JAMAICA, BUT EXPLAINED THAT BRITAIN HAS SO FAR ESCAPED JAMAICAN HOSTILITY. THERE ARE ONLY 3500 UK CITIZENS ON THE ISLAND, AND THE BRITISH INVESTMENT OF 50 MILLION POUNDS IS SPREAD OVER A VARIETY OF SMALL-SCALE ACTIVITIES. PRESTON UNDERSTANDS THAT JAMAICAN SUSPICION OF AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT ON THE ISLAND IS DIRECTED MORE AT MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATIONS THAN AT THE US GOVERNMENT, A POINT MADE PRIVATELY BY FOREIGN MINISTER THOMPSON DURING HIS RECENT VISIT HERE.

5. PRESTON AND LONGWORTH WERE CURIOUS WHETHER THE US ASSESSMENT OF JAMAICAN DEVELOPMENTS VARIES WIDELY FROM THE BRITISH VIEW. THEY ASSUMED THAT THE EMBASSY'S CONTACT REFLECTED A NEW DEGREE OF CONCERN BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT WHICH AS YET HAS NOT SEIZED THE FOREIGN OFFICE.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY CURRENT ANALYSIS OF JAMAICA'S LIKELY COURSE WHICH WE COULD SHARE WITH THE FOREIGN OFFICE. UNLESS THE FCO ATTITUDE REFLECTS MORE ALARM ABOUT JAMAICA, IT WOULD SEEM ACADEMIC TO DISCUSS JOINT EFFORTS TO PROTECT OUR RESPECTIVE BUT VERY DIFFERENT INTERESTS.

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